

“True Love: The Mark of the Christian”
Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus Christ calls men back to a true understanding of the Law of God:
Love as the fulfillment of the law.

1. The Error of the Scribes and Pharisees v. 43

(1) A Very Limited Definition of Love!

*“You have heard that it was said,
‘You shall love your neighbor
and hate your enemy.’”*

-1- We are obliged to love only those who love us!

i.e., Love depends upon the worthiness of the object loved!

-2- A very narrow definition of “neighbor”!

- A neighbor is one who is worthy of being loved.
- An enemy is one who is unworthy of being love.

(2) The Assumption

-1- It is unreasonable to think that we should or could love those who oppose us or hate us!

-2- A very natural sentiment! Surely God would not require this of us!

God does not love *His* enemies, does He?

2. The True Standard of Love vv. 44-48

(1) Love Commanded (44) *“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you,
do good to those who hate you, and pray for those
who spitefully use you and persecute you”*

- “love your enemies”
- “pray for those who persecute you”

(2) Its Character (44-45)

-1- Such love desires the good and blessing of the one loved

- “love” - Gk. AGAPE (not PHILE – a love of mutual affection or soul rapport)
- Such love *takes action* to seek the good of the one loved.

-2- Such love is *not* determined by the worthiness of its object!

-3- Such love reveals a kinship to God Himself – it is God-like! v. 45

- It is of heavenly origin

- This is how God loves: He sends good and blessings upon His enemies!

(3) Its Excellencies Pressed Home (46-48)

-1- Negatively – by means of two questions This love excels all natural love!

**Q1: “For if you love those who love you, what reward have you?
Do not even the tax collectors do the same?”**

i.e, Is this really to be commended as something excellent?
The most notorious of sinners among men love in this way!

**Q2: “And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others?
Do not even the tax collectors do so?”**

If you greet only your fellow Jews, you’re just like anyone else.
This is a standard anyone can keep!
The love of God evidently excels all other kinds of love; it goes beyond.

-2- Positively v. 48

- The perfection of God reflected in this love!

- An **obligation** to reflect our Father’s character *“Therefore you shall be perfect,
just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”*

- The **privilege** of reflecting our Father’s character

- A **promise** that we *shall indeed* reflect our Father’s character!